

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. at the Park Hyatt Philadelphia. In his remarks, he referred to Buntzie Churchill, president, and William R. Sasso, vice-chairman, board of directors, World Affairs Council of Philadelphia; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafari, Deputy President Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr, Minister of Defense Sadun al-Dulaymi, and Speaker of the Transitional National Assembly Hajim al-Hassani of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Death of Gebran Tueni

December 12, 2005

The murder of Gebran Tueni, a Lebanese patriot, Member of Parliament, and publisher of one of Lebanon's leading newspapers, is yet another act of violence aimed at subjugating Lebanon to Syrian domination and silencing the Lebanese press. Mr. Tueni was a well-known opponent of Syrian interference in Lebanon. Like so many other brave Lebanese, Mr. Tueni knew that his courageous stand on behalf of Lebanon's independence and freedom carried great risk. Despite these dangers to his life, he returned to Lebanon a day before his assassination to continue his efforts to promote freedom and democracy in his country.

I strongly condemn the savage attack on Mr. Tueni and extend my condolences to his family and the families of the other innocent victims killed in Lebanon. Syria must comply with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1559, 1595, and 1636 and end its interference in Lebanon once and for all.

Remarks Following a Roundtable Discussion on Medicare in Springfield, Virginia

December 13, 2005

Dr. Mark McClellan and I have just heard from folks who have been analyzing and/or helping people analyze the current Medicare drug benefit and current Medicare—modernized Medicare program.

Awhile ago, I worked with the Congress to modernize and strengthen Medicare for

our seniors. And the reason we did, because if the Government commits to health care for our seniors, it ought to be a program that does the following things: One, provide modern medicine; and two, give seniors a variety of options from which to match their needs to that which is available.

We fully recognize that for some seniors, that this is a daunting task. When you give people choice and options, it is—it can be a situation where people say, “I don’t really—this is something I may not want to do.” And so I want to assure the seniors the following things: One, the Medicare—the new Medicare plan is voluntary; it’s optional; two, that there are people around who are willing to help explain the program for you and to you. There’s—when you have choices to make, there’s going to be some—you do have choices to make—and somebody will be able to sit down with you and explain why this program is good.

For example, Eloise is talking about the fact that she’s spending a lot on prescription drugs, and under the new Medicare plan, she’s able to choose a program that will substantially reduce the cost of her prescription drugs. Low-income seniors will get substantial help. People will be able to match a program to their specific needs.

And what we want to assure seniors around the country is that there is help. You can call 1-800-Medicare. You can get on the Internet with medicare.gov. Ask your son or daughter; ask people in your church; ask people in AARP; ask people in your community center to help you look at what’s available for you. It’s a good deal. It’s a good deal for our seniors.

And so one of the reasons we have come today is to encourage people to see what is available in the new law. Enrollment began in mid-November. The program will begin in January of this year. We urge you to look at the options available to you and sign up by May of next year.

This is Government that has recognized it has a responsibility to help our seniors. And the bill I was fortunate enough to sign into law does just that.

Again, I want to thank you all for joining us. I want to thank you for your hard work, Charlotte. Ellen DeMucci is a pharmacist.